distinguished personalities, organizing of seminars, and grant of scholarships to students from these countries are already in existence in Islamic countries. In addition the ICCR has Cultural Centres in Cairo (Egypt), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Jakarta (Indonesia), and Chairs of Indian Studies in Ankara (Turkey) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). The Council also publishes a Quarterly journal in Arabic entitled "Taqafatue-Hind".

India's membership of Security Council

2511. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the French President during his recent visit to New Delhi on the Republic Day 1998, observed that India had the credentials for permanent membership of the UN Security Council; and

(b) if so, whether he had given any assurance of support to India, tacit direct or indirect to India's claim for such membership, if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) President Chirac during his visit to India in January 1998 had stated that it was India's "Vocation" and "aptitude" to become a permanent member of the Security Council. France has supported inclusion of developing countries in permanent member category of the UN Security Council.

Pakistan Government's response for Bilateral Talks

2512. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the Pakistan Government's response for bilateral talks between India and Pakistan, as proposed by the Prime Minister,

(b) whether the Government have refused to start a dialogue without a mediator, and

(c) whether any talks with or without mediation have been held or are likely to be held; if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The Prime Minister of Pakistan on 23 June, 1998 replied to the Prime Minister's letter of 14 June, 1998 and agreed with Prime Minister's view that they should hold bilateral discussions on all issues of concern during the SAARC Summit in Colombo.

(b) and (c) India remains committed to fostering a relationship of trust friendship and cooperation with Pakistan. Government believe that it is possible to do so only through direct bilateral dialogue. Pakistan, however, has constantly sought mediation in our bilateral relations. Government have made it clear that there is absolutely no question of any international or third party mediation of any kind whatsoever in India-Pakistan bilateral relations. This view has been made publicly known through official statements as well as interaction with all concerned at the political and diplomatic levels.

Prohibition on Indian scientists from visiting countries

2513. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that countries which have imposed sanctions on India propose to prohibit India scientists from visiting those countries; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?